Mr. KEEGAN'S ELOPEMENT

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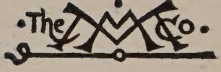
The MMCo.

Winston Churchill

Mr. Keegan's Elopement

BY

WINSTON CHURCHILL, 1871-1947

AUTHOR OF "RICHARD CARVEL," "THE CRISIS," ETC.

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I

MR. KEEGAN'S ELOPEMENT

I

THE northeast wind was very fresh that morning, and drove the seas before it briskly; but the *Denver* went at each of them in her bulldog fashion, and buried her white nose in them, and showered the crests of those which were specially boisterous in glistening spray over her forecastle. In the east the October sun was just beginning to peep over the sea-line, while to the northward lay the great mountain island of Madeira, already changing, by the magic touch of the light, from a phantom grey to that living green so dear to the eyes of a seaman.

Soon signs of life began to appear; a village could be made out nestling in each of the valleys which furrowed the mountain-side, while yellow villas dotted its wooded slopes. In a bight at the south base, white in the morning sunlight, lay the town of Funchal, in front of which, like a huge sentinel, knee-deep, stood a towering rock crowned with a fort, reminding one of a castle on a chess-board.

Mr. Keegan, chief boatswain's mate of the *Denver*, and his friend, Jimmy Legs,[1] the master-at-arms, sat on the weather side of the forecastle, under the forward eight-inch turret, with the collars of their pea-coats turned well up over their ears, taking a morning smoke. Mr. Keegan had a keen eye for the beautiful, and it was his wont on such occasions to sit in silence for as

[1] The name given to the master-at-arms aboard ship.

much as an hour at a time. The master-at-arms, being a 'tween-decks man, delighted in watching the seas break over the bows, although this amusement not infrequently cost him a wetting and a pipeful of tobacco.

Mr. Keegan was a young man with reddish hair and small, expressionless blue eyes, and his Christian name was Dennis. He had a round, full face, abnormally so on one side because of the large piece of navy plug which invariably distended it. I have said that he was chief boatswain's mate of the *Denver*, for the reason that he was so known at the department, and drew his pay as such. But, as a matter of fact, Mr. Keegan's status, and the scope of his influence on board that ship, would be as hard to define as the duties of the captain set forth in the new regulations. His friend the master-at-arms consulted him on all matters of importance; the

junior officers of the ship never interfered with anything he might be doing; and the seniors showed unwonted deference to his opinions.

As the *Denver* drew more and more under the lee of the land the white-caps subsided into lateral swells, and the wind was no longer felt. On board active preparations were being made for coming to anchor, but with that noticeable absence of noise and bustle which is so characteristic of a modern man-of-war. Boat crews were clearing their boats for hoisting out, the lashings were being taken off the gangways, and the booms were ready to drop with the anchor. The master-at-arms shook the ashes out of his pipe, and broke the silence.

"I hate to see that young feller go, Dennis," he said.

Mr. Keegan evidently understood clearly who the young person alluded

to in this somewhat indefinite regret was, for he answered: —

"He's the finest young fellow in the navy, Chimmy; you can put that down."

"I hear the navigator say," the master-at-arms went on, "there ain't no doubt but what he gets his orders for home when we strikes in here."

Mr. Keegan fell into reminiscence.

"There's two cadet cruises I took with him, — him and Mr. Morgan, — and wild cruises they was, too. There ain't much I wouldn't do for both of them young fellers; they're two of a kind, and then they ain't." But before Mr. Keegan could explain this apparent contradiction he was called upon to pipe all hands to breakfast. He watched the men reflectively as they filed below.

"Do you mind that English young lady as Mr. Pennington was consortin' with when we was here before, Chimmy, in the spring?"

The master-at-arms recalled her well.

"Mark my words, Chimmy," said Mr. Keegan, impressively, as he went down the hatch, "he'll be takin' her home with him."

Now the master-at-arms was inclined to doubt this. He was a personal friend of the senhora who did the cooking at the villa where the young lady lived, and the senhora had told him a great deal about the affair in question. How Mr. Pennington and Mr. Morgan were in the habit of going to the villa almost every evening, and how Mr. Morgan talked to the young lady's father on the veranda, while Mr. Pennington and the young lady spent their time in the garden below or in the summer-house; and finally, a day or so before the ship sailed, how Mr. Pennington had asked her father a question (the character of which the senhora could only conjecture), and then had left the villa in haste. She

had afterward overheard the young lady's father express himself on the subject of naval officers, against whom he seemed to be particularly prejudiced. All of this the master-at-arms had confided to Mr. Keegan at the time; but nevertheless, Mr. Keegan had predicted trouble.

"He ain't goin' to heave to for the old one's blessin'," that worthy had said contemptuously; "not if I know Mr. Pennington, he ain't. He'll go back and get her when he gets a chance." At that time the people of the *Denver* had not expected the ship to be ordered back to Madeira.

Afternoon found Mr. Keegan and the master-at-arms going ashore in a surf-boat. They both sat in the stern, and the buttons on their new mustering-clothes shone like bright-work. Mr. Keegan was more than usually silent

and preoccupied, and when they arrived at the pier, instead of having his customary argument with the boatman over the fare, Mr. Keegan gave the man a dollar, greatly to the astonishment and indignation of his side partner, the master-at-arms. Mr. Keegan paid no attention whatever to his friend's protestations, but climbed the stone steps, and led the way up the main street to the Plaza, where he turned into a wine-shop, and sat down at one of the tables.

"We're not drinking to-day, you Dago," he said, in response to the smiling inquiry of the proprietor. "Porto some cigarettos!" Thus having aired his Portuguese, and obtained the desired articles, Mr. Keegan produced a roll of bills from his pocket, which he had just received from the paymaster, and proceeded to count them over carefully.

"There, Chimmy," he remarked, rolling his tobacco from one cheek to the

other, as he laid the pile on the table; "I don't get full this time, nor you don't; what's more, I don't lend none of the bullies money. But if this here seventy-three dollars can help Mr. Pennington to get that there English young lady, and take her off in the packet to-night, he's welcome to it; that's all." This was a very long speech for Mr. Keegan to make.

"Is he going to try it, Dennis?" asked the master-at-arms, incredulously.

"Is he goin' to try it?" Mr. Keegan repeated witheringly. "Ain't you ashamed, what's been three years with him, for that there remark?"

The master-at-arms puffed at his cigarette in silence, and evidently felt the force of the rebuke.

"Yes, Chimmy," Mr. Keegan went on in a milder tone, "he is going to try it;" and then he added, with an air of great secrecy, "He is leavin' a good

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deal of the particulars to you and me."

Whereupon he unfolded a plan to the master-at-arms, who could not but wonder at its wisdom and completeness. It would almost seem as if Mr. Keegan had conducted a similar elopement on his own account. Mr. Keegan's powers of locution were not great, but he had a remarkable knack of conveying his meaning, the more remarkable because his face was absolutely without expression, and he never used any gestures. Perhaps one of the secrets of his ability to express himself lay in the fact that he alternated in his methods of explanation, now putting his hearers to shame at their stupidity, now leaving out a palpable conclusion, that they might give themselves credit for unusual perception. In any case, he never said any more than he had to.

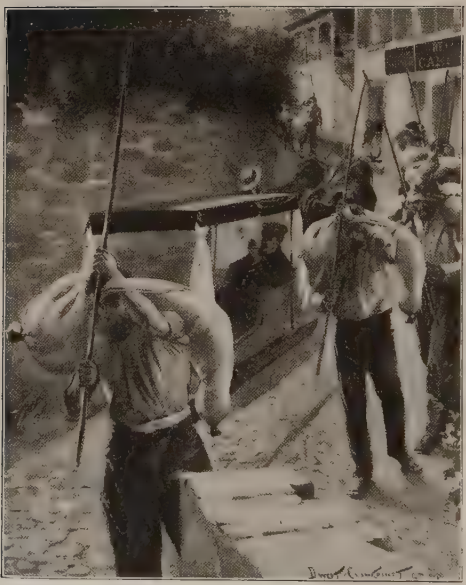
"Now," he concluded, when he had

gone into every detail, "you have got your sailin' orders, Chimmy. Get your friend, the senhora, to tell the young lady what I told you. We can't take no big trunks — nothin' but a small kit. I'll be makin' sure of a boat and a sky-pilot, and be here at two bells."

The master-at-arms went out into the Plaza, and hired a *bulla-carta*. A bulla-carta is in reality a covered sled, provided with curtains, and drawn by two oxen. For the proper management of these vehicles, according to Portuguese ideas, two men are necessary. One goes ahead, in order to check any ambitious intentions on the part of the oxen, and apparently does the guiding. The duties of the other are harder to define: he receives the fare incidentally, and urges on the oxen in those plaintive, wailing tones which he who has been to Madeira can never forget, and which incline him to believe that the

Portuguese language is one of lamentation. As Mr. Keegan tersely remarked, everything is "on skates" in Madeira. The streets of Funchal are paved with small lava blocks, set on end, and polished to a degree that makes walking dangerous to people who wear the shoes of civilisation. Hence the owners of the bulla-cartas do a thriving business with foreigners, especially up the slope, where a false step is fraught with no inconsiderable consequences.

It was up the hillside, or rather up the first slopes of the mountain, that the villa to which the master-at-arms was going was situated. Few visit Madeira who do not take that delightful ride up the mountain on horseback, and experience the delirium of the coast down, over the polished stones, in a wicker sled. Ascending, the traveller looks from his saddle over the high yellow walls on each hand into inviting gardens



"HE SAT BACK BEHIND THE CURTAINS OF HIS 'BULLA-CARTA.'"

of tropical luxuriance, their shade trees often completely arching the way over his head. But the master-at-arms cared nothing about looking into the gardens, and had a sailor's prejudice against horses; he discreetly preferred the bulla-carta. Even the picturesque procession of wine-growers which he met coming down the mountain, with skins slung over their shoulders, made no more of an impression on him than if they had been a draft of new hands. He sat back behind the curtains of his bulla-carta, and smoked brown-paper cigarettes, and meditated on the gravity of his mission; and he wondered whether the senhora would look with favour on the plan. Only once, when he had to turn out for a fat ecclesiastic from the convent above, was he aroused from these reflections. The priest was descending at a pace which would have defied a trolley-car, but sat in his sled

with as much equanimity as if he were pronouncing a benediction, his guide deftly balanced on the runners behind.

"He's sure swift for a holy father!" the master-at-arms exclaimed aloud, lifting the curtains in order to obtain a better view of the vanishing figure; "but Dennis ain't hirin' him for the ceremony — you can't trust them Dagos even for splicin'."

It was almost dusk when the master-at-arms recognised the back gate of Mr. Inglefield's villa, and directed the gentleman at the side to draw up, which he accomplished with a great deal of unnecessary noise. Thereupon the master-at-arms alighted, and designated a point a little higher up for the men to wait for him. Then he opened the gate, and cautiously entered the garden. He sat down under a banana tree to hit upon some method of attracting the senhora's attention; for the hour was

unusual for a call, and the senhora was undoubtedly engaged in the kitchen. As the villa was on a rather steep portion of the slope, the house was considerably higher than the garden, its broad piazza being among the tree-tops. Here was a predicament! If he waited until the senhora finished cooking the dinner, put on her evening gown, and came down to the little porch where she received her callers, all would be lost. Bearing in mind the sentiments concerning his profession which the owner of the villa had expressed at various times, it was out of the question for him to go to the senhora, as he would undoubtedly be seen by Mr. Inglefield from the veranda. While he was vainly trying to hit upon an expedient, wishing ardently the while that Mr. Keegan might have undertaken this matter himself, he heard the rustle of a woman's skirts coming down the path. His first

impulse was to climb the tree, but on second thought he decided to sit still; it was getting dark, and he might not be seen where he was.

He had barely reached this decision when there appeared in the path, directly before him, a young girl. She was tall and fair, with that wealth of colour peculiar to English women; and as she stood there in the twilight, shading her eyes with her hand, the master-at-arms was transported with admiration. From where she stood one could look through an opening in the trees far out into the harbour, and he had no doubt that fortune had thrown him in the way of Miss Inglefield herself, and that she was looking at the *Denver*. He rose, took off his cap, and coughed slightly to attract her attention. At the sound the girl dropped her hand quickly, and turned toward him, without, however, betraying the least alarm; her

manner was a mixture of surprise and self-possession. The master-at-arms was anything but self-possessed; he was, on the contrary, very much disconcerted. Miss Inglefield, for it was she, waited for him to speak; but at length, despairing of this, she spoke herself: —

"Did you wish to see any one?"

The voice was softer than any the master-at-arms had ever heard, and its tones were so kind that he took heart.

"Yes, miss," he answered; "I guess it's you I want to see."

"Me?" she exclaimed, in evident wonder.

"I'm from the *Denver*, miss," he explained.

The master-at-arms watched the girl keenly to see what effect this announcement would have, but if her colour deepened it was too dark to notice it.

"So you are from the *Denver*, and wish to see me," she answered. "If

that is the case, I think it would be well, for many reasons, to retire to the summer-house."

She picked up her white skirts, and led the way down a secluded path lined with vines to a little arbour in the corner of the garden. The master-at-arms followed, not without misgivings concerning his ability to handle a mission of such delicacy as this promised to be. The ease and dignity of her bearing, and the simplicity of her speech, completely mystified him; he had expected any reception but this. When they reached the summer-house, she motioned him toward a wicker bench, and sat down beside him.

"I think we shall be safe from interruption here," she said, with a smile of encouragement; and then she added, "Did any one send you?"

Although the master-at-arms thought the question a trifle strange, he could not but admit that it was pertinent.

"Dennis Keegan sent me, miss," he replied.

"Dennis Keegan! And you wish to see me — are you sure?"

There was such an evident note of disappointment in this that the master-at-arms was more puzzled than ever. Was it possible that Mr. Pennington had not told her about Dennis?

"Dennis is the man who is actin' for Mr. Pennington, you know, miss — sorter under his orders."

But Miss Inglefield, greatly to his discomfiture, did not seem to grasp the situation in the least.

"Who are you?" she demanded, with a touch of impatience.

"I'm the master-at-arms of the *Denver*, miss," he answered, in a tone of injured dignity.

"But the orders you speak of, what are they? I do not quite understand."

What were the orders? There began

to dawn on the master-at-arms, from various things he had noticed in Miss Inglefield's conversation and manner, a suspicion that she had had no previous intimation of the communication he was about to impart. This was a point which had not been touched upon by Mr. Keegan. He was in a quandary. To withdraw now might injure Mr. Pennington's honour, and, besides, make things exceedingly unpleasant for him, the master-at-arms. But if Mr. Keegan had by any chance made a mistake, to go on would involve Mr. Pennington in a difficulty the gravity of which the master-at-arms had not before considered. But his faith in Mr. Keegan, and the fear of his displeasure, finally predominated.

"You see, miss," he began, "the reason I come up here, and not Dennis, was this: I happen to be acquainted with the seenora as does the cookin'

for you, and Dennis he said for me to tell this here to the seenora, and the seenora — "

"Has Mr. Pennington sent a note?" Miss Inglefield broke in, in despair.

"A note!" the master-at-arms repeated deprecatingly; "he never insulted me or Dennis with a note yet, miss."

"Please go on, then, quickly," she said; "I may be called at any minute."

"There ain't nothin' to it exceptin' this, miss," he began, in no wise to be hurried, however: "Mr. Pennington's time's up on the ship to-day, and he has bought tickets for *two*" — the master-at-arms thought the inference a very happy one, and emphasised the numeral — "on the steamer what leaves to-night. Then he goes to Dennis Keegan, who's been on many a cruise with him in 's younger days, and in many a tight place, too, and he says, 'Keegan, there's

a young lady what lives up here on the hill behind Funchal—' 'What you'd like to take off with you this evenin', Mr. Pennington,' Dennis puts in, 'but there be cert'in reasons again' your goin' up and gettin' her yourself.' Mr. Pennington looked sorter surprised, but, Lord! miss, he ought to know there ain't much goin' on what Dennis ain't on to. 'Well, sir,' Dennis went on, without givin' him a show to speak, 'all you got to do is to leave this here business to me and Chimmy'—that's me, miss,—'and if that there young lady ain't ready to go with you at whatever time you say, it won't be our fault, sir.'"

The master-at-arms paused, and wiped the perspiration from his face with his red handkerchief, watching Miss Inglefield anxiously the while. She had sat quietly by during this recital, but he could see that she was agitated now by

her breathing, which came and went quickly, and his confidence in Mr. Keegan's judgment redoubled. Evidently, if the young lady in the case was as much in love as she appeared from these symptoms, the course he was taking was most justifiable. The master-at-arms had always deemed a little prevarication in a good cause no harm. There was, apparently, quite a mental struggle going on within Miss Inglefield. Once or twice she seemed about to speak, and then to change her mind. It was at this point that a hearty masculine voice was heard calling loudly from the garden above: —

"Eleanor!"

Miss Inglefield rose.

"Coming, papa," she answered; but to the astonishment of the master-at-arms, she did not betray the slightest alarm. She walked slowly toward the step, her head bent downward in

thought; then she suddenly drew herself up to the full height of her commanding figure, and faced him.

"At what time will Mr. Pennington be here?" she demanded.

"At half-past eleven, at the back gate, miss," he answered, doubting if he heard aright.

"Tell him I shall be ready," she said; and before he could reply she had vanished among the vines.

The master-at-arms stood looking after her for a moment, and then made his way out of the garden, keeping a bright lookout for Mr. Inglefield. He found his bulla-carta, after some trouble, in front of a stray wine-shop which was built in the wall, and into which he dived precipitately in search of his Jehus. It is to be doubted if either of them understood the choice maritime invectives that he heaped upon them impartially for hiding themselves; but

they motioned him into the vehicle with soothing urbanity, and started for the convent above, blissfully oblivious to the occasional mutterings from within.

Upon his arrival at the convent, the master-at-arms proceeded, by a judicious use of Mr. Keegan's funds, to make arrangements with the sled-owners, by which every sled was to be ready for descent at eleven o'clock. He impressed upon them that a large party of gentlemen of his acquaintance wished to make the descent by moonlight. One and all promised that it should be as the senhor wished, although each had his private doubts about the moonlight. This done, the master-at-arms descended to Funchal, where he found Mr. Keegan awaiting him in the wine-shop, engaged in making life unbearable for the Portuguese occupants. On the entrance of the master-at-arms he desisted abruptly from this pastime, and drew him into a corner.

"Well, Chimmy, is it a go?" he asked.

The master-at-arms regarded him in a way that plainly signified his approbation of such an arch-diplomatist, and then launched into a glowing description of his share of the transaction, interspersed with frequent reproaches for not informing him beforehand of the true state of affairs. Mr. Keegan listened with evident satisfaction.

"She ain't goin' to take no trunks, is she?" he inquired, with some apprehension.

The master-at-arms confessed he had forgotten to caution the young lady on this point.

"Women, Chimmy," said Mr. Keegan, profoundly, "will never leave any spare riggin' behind if they ain't made to."

II

II

YOUNG Ensign Pennington was reclining on the lounge in the smoking-room of Burroughs's Hotel, Funchal, in anything but a happy frame of mind. His travelling-case was at his feet, and his trunks were on board the steamer which was to leave for England that night. The other occupant of the room, his friend and classmate Morgan, had assumed an absurdly awkward position on the table, which he always chose in preference to a chair, and was doing most of the talking.

Perhaps nothing could better show the difference between the temperaments of Pennington and Morgan than

their present attitudes. Under an apparent languor, and a seeming indifference to his own affairs and those of others, Pennington concealed qualities which made him, young as he was, one of the most efficient officers in the service. Morgan, on the other hand, had a continual craving for excitement, which betrayed itself in every action. Now he was shifting restlessly from one elbow to the other, while Pennington had not changed his position since lighting his cigar. Their characters dovetailed into each other with such nicety that few closer friendships have been formed than that which existed between them. Morgan's impetuosity was offset by Pennington's inertia, his frankness by Pennington's reserve, while they possessed in common certain qualities, invariably found in a true seaman, which served to cement the bond. But it was Pennington who wielded the in-

fluence, and his was the only influence which had ever been known to affect Morgan. Their names had become associated at the naval academy, where Morgan had been stroke of the crew, of which Pennington had been captain, and since then they had been separated but little. It had been their singular good fortune — for the discrepancy between their standings had been great — to take the two years' cruise together as midshipmen, and as ensigns they had both been ordered to the *Denver*. Now, it would seem, the time had come for a long separation, and each felt as only young fellows who have spent the best part of their lives under such circumstances can feel, and found it hard to realise that it might be many years before they would meet. But gradually Morgan approached a subject which was uppermost in his mind as well as in Pennington's. It had always

been said of Morgan that his friends' troubles worried him more than his own, and perhaps the chances this particular trouble offered for something hazardous especially appealed to him. At last he broke in, with characteristic abruptness: —

"Of course it is none of my business, Jack, but when I see you go off in this way without seeing Miss Inglefield, without even so much as writing her a line, in spite of the fact that five months ago you wanted to marry her, I can't help saying something, for it isn't much like you. I tell you what, Jack, you may travel some, but it will be a devilish long time before you come across another girl like her."

Morgan paused, uncertain what the effect of this speech would be; for, beyond the fact that he had asked Mr. Inglefield for his daughter, and had been refused, Pennington had told him

nothing of the affair. Now he only smiled a little wearily.

"It is no use, Dutchman," he said, in the tone of affectionate forbearance that he often used with his friend; "that is all past now."

"Thanks to your confounded, misplaced principle!" Morgan went on a trifle warmly. "Renouncing her for a little thing like her father's refusal! You might have known what he would have said before you asked him; I could have told you that. If I cared as much for the girl as you do, Jack, and she cared as much for me as I know she does for you, I would take her home with me in spite of all the English in Madeira."

"Don't talk nonsense, Dutchman," said Pennington, lighting another cigar; but Morgan noticed that his hand shook a little as he held it, and this encouraged him.

"It isn't as if you were as I am, and only had your pay," he remonstrated; "or it isn't as if you were only knocking the bottom out of your own life," he continued, throwing in the arguments as they came to him. "And perhaps you do not think I know what has been the matter with you ever since we left here in the spring; but I do, and I call coming back here fate."

"It looks to me as if the department had rather a large share in that," replied Pennington, half-heartedly. "But don't let us worry about it, Dutchman," he added, very much in the way he used to quiet his friend in the old days when they were midshipmen together. It seemed to be his place to do the comforting, no matter whose the trouble. But now Morgan would not be comforted. He slid off the table, and went over to the lounge beside Pennington.

"Jack," he began, with an earnest-

ness which surprised even Pennington, who was used to his ways, "you have a perfect right to ruin your own life if you want to, although a good many of us would hate to see you do it; still, that is your own affair; but you haven't any right to ruin her life. I've seen more of women than you have, and there are some who get over things of that sort. She never will."

Pennington was silent. A party was coming down the veranda singing the refrain of a hearty English melody. They seated themselves immediately in front of the windows of the smoking-room and proceeded to light their pipes.

"She used to be such a jolly girl," said one, in answer to some inaudible remark, "but she never goes anywhere now."

Pennington and Morgan listened aimlessly, without well knowing why. Morgan chafed at the interruption, coming

as it did at such a serious turn in their conversation, and it seemed to banish his last hope of influencing his friend. The lights in the smoking-room were low, and the broad, checkered shoulders of the speaker, whose back was turned, were pushed into the window, his elbows resting on the sill. His Oxford cap was tilted jauntily on one side of his head, and a pipe, as if to complete the poise, protruded from the other. The subject thus brought up seemed an interesting one to the whole party, for those who were still humming the air stopped to join in the talk. It was evident that some person was being discussed.

"Had she been with us to-night we shouldn't have had such a beastly slow time," said another.

To this there was a unanimous assent.

"I wonder what is the reason of it all?" he continued.

"They say it is some chap in the

American navy," volunteered another, "who was here last spring —"

But Pennington did not wait to hear any more. He had risen, and his grasp on Morgan's arm was like that of a vise.

"Let's get out of this, Dutchman," he said.

Morgan followed him out of the room. Pennington stalked through the corridors at a pace he found it difficult to keep up with, and through the office, where Mr. Burroughs, the proprietor, was reading the *London Times* of the week before. He glanced at the two with the air of a man who has long since ceased trying to account for American idiosyncrasies, and then resumed his reading. At the hotel entrance Pennington brought up against a man who was coming in out of the darkness; the force of the impact, and the heavy blow of the travelling-case against the

knees, would have been sufficient to stun an ordinary mortal.

But Mr. Keegan was not an ordinary mortal. He waived Pennington's apologies, saluted him, and then thrust his hands into his pockets with his customary nonchalance. Both Pennington and Morgan stood regarding him in no little surprise, and waited for him to speak. Mr. Keegan rolled his tobacco from one cheek to the other, and surveyed them with deliberation.

"You're the very gentleman I'm lookin' for, Mr. Pennington," he said at length; "but I weren't expectin' to run again' you so soon." This was literal, if nothing else.

"Neither was I, Keegan, to tell the truth," replied Pennington, smiling in spite of himself as he picked up the travelling-case. "I was sorry you were not on board when I left the ship," he added, "for I wanted to see you before I went."

Mr. Keegan evidently thought this speech perfunctory, for he paid no attention to it.

"I come up here to remind you of somethin' you must have forgot, sir. Have you got all your stuff aboard, Mr. Pennington?" he asked.

Pennington was puzzled. Mr. Keegan did not look as if he had been drinking; but then Pennington remembered that Mr. Keegan's appearance was never materially altered under such circumstances. He had seen him in a state of inebriation more than once.

"I do not remember to have forgotten anything, Keegan," he answered. "I sent all my baggage out this afternoon."

"How about your tickets, sir?"

Pennington would have resented this catechism from any other petty officer, but from Mr. Keegan somehow it did not seem an impertinence. He had always been interested in his welfare.

"The agent was to have my ticket for me at ten, Keegan," said Pennington. "Why?"

"Nothin', sir," said Mr. Keegan, with admirable unconcern, "except the master-at-arms and me knows of a certain lady as would like to go with you, sir, if you cared about takin' her."

Pennington looked bewildered; but Morgan, who had been listening with increasing astonishment, realised the purport of this intelligence at once. He grasped Mr. Keegan's hand excitedly.

"Tell her Mr. Pennington will take her, Keegan; of course he will."

"Shut up, Morgan!" said Pennington, beginning to pace the floor, while Mr. Keegan spat demurely into a convenient flower-vase, and waited. Finally Pennington faced him abruptly.

"Who told you this, Keegan?"

"The lady herself told —"

"What lady?"

"Miss Inglefield," said Mr. Keegan, in no wise abashed.

"Well?"

"The lady herself told the master-at-arms, sir. He went up to the viller this evenin' to see the seenora what does the cookin' there, and came acrost the young lady herself as she was takin' the air in the garden."

Pennington resumed his pacing. There must be some mistake — certainly *she* could not have suggested such a thing. Such is the weight of prejudice, and such is the iron-bound custom which, even in a nineteenth century of enlightenment, prevents a woman from speaking her mind, that Mr. Keegan's statement was divested of all probable truth by the idea that the proposition had come from Miss Inglefield. Pennington could not believe it.

"What did Miss Inglefield say to the

master-at-arms, Keegan?" he asked at last.

"She said as all you had to do was to come up there to the back gate at half-past eleven, sir, and she'd be ready," Mr. Keegan replied without hesitation.

By this time Morgan's patience was exhausted.

"Don't be a fool, Jack," he said. "Can't you see you've got all you can do now to get up there by half-past eleven? The girl has twice as much sand as you have."

"If you don't start now, sir," put in Mr. Keegan, "there ain't no use goin' at all."

"Keegan," said Pennington, — and the coolness of his speech and the command of his voice struck both the others as he spoke, — "I have known you for nearly nine years now, and you are one of the best friends I have ever had. You have pulled me out of two or three tight

places when I was younger, which I am not likely to forget. In those nine years you have never deceived me, and I do not think you capable of it; but from what I know of Miss Inglefield I think it more than probable that the master-at-arms has misunderstood her. I want to thank you for this, just the same." Then, turning to Morgan, he continued: "Can't you see, Dutchman, even if there is not a mistake, how impossible it would be to do what Keegan proposes to-night? Of course I shall wait for the next steamer now. But there are certain things to be thought of — all very necessary in their way, and very hard to get in two hours and a half."

"Mr. Pennington," said Mr. Keegan, gravely, "if Chimmy has made a mistake on this, then I'm willin' to enlist in the marine corps to-morrow." This was more emphatic than any oath Mr. Keegan could think of. Then he concluded,

with a finality which set further demur at naught: "There won't be no trouble about a sky-pilot; there's one on the ship ye're goin' on as says he will fix things up, and keep quiet till he does. And about details, there ain't one you can mention what ain't fixed, sir."

Whereupon Morgan picked up the travelling-case, and went out, followed by Mr. Keegan and Pennington, the latter in a state of mind difficult to describe, and one not at all within the comprehension of either Morgan or Mr. Keegan. Mr. Keegan had brought up three horses, one of which he mounted himself, while Morgan mounted another, and Pennington mechanically got on the third. They started off at as quick a pace as the law would permit, the runners keeping silently along by their sides. Burroughs's Hotel was situated on an eminence to the west of the

town, while the Inglefield villa lay on the slopes to the northward. The road led for some distance along the high cliffs which skirt the harbor, where the anchor lights of the vessels twinkled and danced. Pennington could distinguish the *Denver* by her white sides and her uncompromising, bulky form, revealed by the electric lights of the big black steamer hardly a stone's throw away from her. But his thoughts were not on the *Denver;* he was looking at the smoke already pouring out of the pipes of the steamer; it was time — hardly two hours. And, perhaps, then — "What nonsense!" he exclaimed to himself, half aloud. It could not be possible that this girl, who had refused him with such firmness only five months ago, would even consent to such a madcap undertaking as this, much less propose one. Still Mr. Keegan seemed, as usual, to be sure of himself, and to know

what he was doing. That worthy headed the column, whistling softly a rather dubious air he had picked up in a Bowery theatre the year before. Mr. Keegan's horsemanship was none of the best; when the pace quickened to a trot he managed to keep on, however, and comforted himself with the reflection that it was too dark for the Dago heelers to criticise. By the time they reached the town its narrow streets were almost deserted, and the wine-shops were beginning to close. Mr. Keegan reined in his horse, and waited for the others to come up.

"That there ticket agent has got to be held, Mr. Morgan," he said.

Morgan was wise enough to see the force of this, and also that they stood a better chance of success if Mr. Keegan went up with Pennington. Although it was a bitter disappointment to him not to take a more material part in the at-

tempt than "holding" the agent, he acquiesced at once, and had ridden off before Pennington could expostulate.

"Now, sir," remarked Mr. Keegan, "we ain't got no time to burn gettin' up that hill."

They clattered over the stones in defiance of a municipal law, and were soon on the ascent. Except for an occasional lamp at the entrance to a villa, it was so dark that they could scarcely make out the high walls on each side of them. Once or twice Pennington had almost decided to go back, but Mr. Keegan pushed ahead with such diligence, as if there could be no possible doubt of the outcome, that Pennington kept on after him. As they passed under one of the dim lights in the wall a sled shot by, in which Pennington made out, smoking with great complacency, two of the *Denver's* liberty party.

"You have managed this well, Kee-

gan," said Pennington, as he pulled up beside him.

"Chimmy is doin' that, sir," Mr. Keegan replied modestly; "he is up there gettin' 'em started." And then he added, with a touch of satisfaction, "Unless the old one has a roller-coaster, he ain't got much show this evenin'."

Pennington was not in a position to express his sentiments in this matter, but he found himself fervently hoping that Mr. Inglefield was not provided with anything so fatal to his chances of success. The master-at-arms was evidently doing his duty thoroughly, and each sled that passed them tended more and more to convince him of the method in Mr. Keegan's madness. Pennington began to think that, after all, there must be some foundation for his statements.

They urged on their horses, which by this time were fairly tired of the rapid climbing, Mr. Keegan cursing the "heel-

ers," as he called them, when they growled at the speed, and in the next breath offering them another dollar apiece. After what seemed an age to Pennington, they arrived opposite a recess in the wall, where Mr. Keegan drew up.

"Is that you, Chimmy?" he called out in a stage whisper.

The master-at-arms emerged.

"How about things, Chimmy?" Mr. Keegan inquired. "Is they all down?"

"All down but that there," responded the master-at-arms, pointing over his shoulder. Just at this moment it struck him that a coasting sled accommodated but two; and how he and Mr. Keegan were to escape the clutches of the irate father-in-law elect was a point he had not previously considered.

"Well, I'll be ——, Dennis!" he exclaimed profanely.

But Mr. Keegan, who divined his thoughts, refrained from censure. He

was quick to make a virtue out of necessity.

"That ain't no matter, Chimmy," he said consolingly; "if the old one wastes any time tryin' to pinch us, he'll never get hold of Mr. Pennington there."

Pennington struck a match, and looked at his watch; it was twenty-five minutes after eleven.

"It is time we were there, Keegan," he said.

This was virtually an admission in Mr. Keegan's favour, and Mr. Keegan knew it. Having had a very thorough understanding of Pennington's character, he had appreciated the magnitude and delicacy of his undertaking, and had handled that gentleman to perfection, as we have seen. If he felt any exultation now he did not show it, for he only cautioned the master-at-arms, by way of reply, to stay by the sled, and not to trust the Dago out of his sight.

Pennington and Mr. Keegan started up as noiselessly as they might, keeping close to the wall. The darkness was so intense that they were obliged to feel for the gate, and their footfalls sounded to Pennington like gunshots in the oppressive silence. After a prolonged search, and just as they were on the point of going back to the master-at-arms for more accurate information, Pennington came to a break.

"Here it is, Keegan," he whispered; "I can feel the hinges."

They tried the latch, but the gate was locked. Mr. Keegan bent down to the keyhole, and gave a low whistle; but there was no response. "I'll get over, Mr. Pennington," he said; "give me your shoulder, sir."

Mr. Keegan was soon on top of the wall, whence he slid easily down on the other side, and Pennington could hear him trying the lock.

"I'll just reconnoitre up the yard a bit, Mr. Pennington," he called through the keyhole; "you stay there, sir."

As Pennington waited outside the gate, and minute after minute slipped by, all his misgivings returned. He began to feel like a criminal, and, what was worse, like a fool. He might have known, he told himself, that this was all an imagination of the master-at-arms, and he wondered that as practical a man as Mr. Keegan had been duped by it. It was a choice business, too, for an officer in the United States Navy to be mixed up in. What a delectable story it would make when it became known in the service! It was not that he did not love the girl; he reflected bitterly on Morgan's words, and felt they were only too true. He remembered how his heart had sunk into his boots when he had heard they were to be ordered back to Madeira, and decided then to leave, if his orders were

there, by the first steamer. And now by the well-meaning but misguided interference of his old friend Mr. Keegan, aided and abetted by Morgan and the master-at-arms, he was plunged again into the depths of misery, and, moreover, likely to be held up to his fellow-officers as an object of ridicule.

Then the things which had happened the last time he saw her began to crowd into his mind. How distinctly he recalled them — just what she had worn, and just what she had said! She would never marry him without her father's consent, and she doubted very much whether her father would give it. She was standing beside a rose bush at the time; he could see her now — the bush itself was only on the other side of that gate. So he had gone into the house to find Mr. Inglefield, and had left her in the garden looking after him. It was as this painful point in his recollections

was reached that Pennington thought he heard footsteps on the other side of the wall. He listened intently; it seemed as if there was another step besides Mr. Keegan's. It must be his imagination, he told himself. Then there came the sound of a key turning in the lock, the gate opened, and some one came out.

It was not Mr. Keegan.

"Jack!" exclaimed the person.

"Eleanor!" exclaimed Pennington.

Mr. Keegan closed the door, and discreetly locked it again, putting the key in his pocket. He remained silently contemplating the two for an instant, for they had apparently forgotten his existence, and then he laid his hand on Pennington's arm.

"Better belay that now, Mr. Pennington," he said, "and get under way." Here Mr. Keegan was forced to get rid of a certain amount of tobacco. "Keep

a good full, Mr. Pennington, and God bless you both, sir!"

Pennington grasped Mr. Keegan's hand, and wrung it.

"Eleanor," he said simply, "this is my old friend, Mr. Keegan. It will take me a long time to tell you how much we owe to him."

"Never mind that, sir," answered Mr. Keegan, as he took off his cap, and rubbed his eyes suspiciously with the sleeve of his muster jacket. "And, miss," he continued, by way of acknowledgment of a very graceful speech Miss Inglefield had made him, "you've got the finest young officer in the navy."

"The very finest," Mr. Keegan repeated to himself, when they had gone; "she has sure got a prize." He sat down against the wall, and began to feel very unhappy, so much so as to become totally careless as to pursuit or

capture. It was thus his friend the master-at-arms found him, or rather fell over him, some ten minutes afterward.

"Anything yet from the old one, Dennis?" he inquired.

Mr. Keegan rose.

"He may get on to it now," he said, "and he may get on to it to-morrow. We'll just stand by a spell, in case he gets uneasy. You boost me up, Chimmy, till I see if there's a light in the house."

Mr. Keegan got on the wall and immediately threw himself down on his face.

"There's two of 'em comin' this way with lanterns, Chimmy," he whispered, "and I think one of them's the old one."

"How long ago was this, Jennings?" said a voice which, although greatly agitated, the master-at-arms recognised as one he had heard before.

"Habout ten minutes, sir, it might 'ave been."

"Why didn't you call me before — at once?"

"Hi thought as it was Perdita and that sailor as used to come to see her sometimes, sir."

Then followed a period occupied by tentative efforts on the gate, during which the master-at-arms was becoming decidedly nervous.

"Thanks to your — conjectures, Jennings, Miss Inglefield has gone off with a —"

Jennings was not enlightened; his efforts on the gate had been unremitting, and just at this critical moment it fell heavily outward. Mr. Inglefield rushed out, holding the lantern the height of his face, and peered down the hill; but the master-at-arms had disappeared in the darkness.

"You go up to the convent as fast as

you can post, Jennings," he said; "I shall wait for you here."

Jennings departed in double time up the hill, while Mr. Inglefield walked restlessly up and down. Mr. Keegan was anxiously considering the possibility of there being another sled at the convent, which the master-at-arms had overlooked, when Perdita arrived on the scene, breathless, and trouble written in every line of her face.

"Ah, senhor," she exclaimed, "the senhorita!"

The master of the villa grasped her by both shoulders.

"You knew of this, Perdita," he said sternly.

"No, senhor, no; I assure you I know nothing."

"Jennings tells me he saw your friend with Miss Eleanor."

"I know not what you mean, senhor," Perdita disclaimed excitedly; and then,

falling back for fluency on her native tongue, she poured forth a torrent of protestations. Her efforts, however, plainly failed to convince Mr. Inglefield. Apparently he entertained the same distrust of her race as did Mr. Keegan, for he leaned wearily against the wall, and motioned her to cease.

"That will do, Perdita," he said, whereupon the senhora found relief in tears.

The wall about Mr. Inglefield's villa was so hard and uneven, and Mr. Keegan was becoming so cramped in his position, that he was thinking of letting himself down on the inside when Jennings was heard returning. He was accompanied by two or three Portuguese from the convent, but, to Mr. Keegan's great relief, was without the sled. When the circumstance of the liberty party became known to Mr. Inglefield, he said a great many things Mr. Keegan

expected him to say, but he added a few remarks about Pennington which Mr. Keegan had not anticipated. Finally the denunciation of that gentleman became so vigorous that Mr. Keegan could stand it no longer.

"He is a sneaking scoundrel!" declared Mr. Inglefield.

Here Mr. Keegan slid down from the wall, and approached the irate but astonished father with a somewhat rolling but easy gait. He carefully looked him over, from force of habit perhaps, before accosting him.

"Mr. Inglefield," he began, very much as if he were addressing a water-butt, "I took your feelin's into account before comin' for'ard, sir; but I ain't goin' to stand by and listen to no such things about Mr. Pennington as you was givin' vent to."

Mr. Inglefield managed to recover himself sufficiently, during the interval

THE ELOPEMENT.

occupied by Mr. Keegan in transferring his tobacco to the other cheek, to exclaim angrily: —

"Who the deuce are you, sir, and what are you doing on my wall?"

"I know this here come rather suddin," Mr. Keegan went on, without taking the trouble to answer the question; "but I want to say right now there ain't no finer young man anywhere, and that this here business wasn't his fault."

"Wasn't his fault!" roared Mr. Inglefield.

"No, sir," said Mr. Keegan, coolly; "it was me what fixed the thing up. It was me what got your daughter to consent to it, and brought Mr. Pennington up here to get her; and if you ain't blessin' me for it some day I'm a sergeant of marines."

"You!" repeated Mr. Inglefield, in a species of stupefaction.

Now it so happened that the master-at-arms, who had remained concealed some distance down the hill, heard the commotion, and became possessed with the idea that his friend Mr. Keegan was getting into trouble. He arrived on the scene just at this instant.

"Now, Mr. Inglefield," Mr. Keegan continued, glancing around at the faces about the lantern, "this here ain't no place to talk private matters; but if you'll take the trouble to step inside with us, me and Chimmy'll try to give you a loocid report of this here, sir."

"Come inside, by all means, if you can throw any light on this rascally business," said Mr. Inglefield, picking up the lantern, and leading the way to the house. The others followed.

"Dennis," said the master-at-arms to Mr. Keegan, pulling him by the sleeve, "there ain't no use of my goin' in

there; you knows how to handle the old one. I'll be payin' the seenora that little call I missed this afternoon."

Mr. and Mrs. Pennington, or the master-at-arms, for that matter, never knew precisely how Mr. Keegan "handled the old one" during the half-hour he was closeted with him. Mr. Keegan, of course, would never tell. All he could be induced to say, when questioned on the subject by the master-at-arms, was: —

"He went in like a lion and come out like a lamb, didn't he, Chimmy?"

The master-at-arms admitted that he did.

"Well, Chimmy," he would reply, solemnly blinking his little eyes, "that there's all there is to it."

In the service journal, which is published in New York, there appeared the following item: —

"A most interesting and novel wedding took place on Thursday, October 31, at Funchal, Madeira, on board the steamer *Southampton* of the Union Line. Ensign John R. Pennington, U.S.N., married Miss Eleanor Inglefield, daughter of Robert Inglefield, Esq., of Ravenside, long and eminently connected with the British diplomatic service. The bride and groom left immediately for England. In consequence of Mr. Pennington's hurried departure, the wedding was a surprise even to his brother officers of the *Denver*. The young couple are now at Newport, where Ensign Pennington is stationed; and it is understood that the bride's father will spend the winter with them."

The report was true, for before the *Denver* left Funchal the Inglefield villa was closed, and the senhora reigned

supreme there; and Mr. Inglefield had gone to see his new son-in-law at Newport, and to pay his first visit to the United States.

As for Mr. Keegan, he now owns a large gold chain, attached to a large gold watch, of which he is very proud, and which he wears on all occasions. On the outside of the case is the monogram "D.K.," very handsomely engraved, and on the inside a mysterious inscription, the purport of which Mr. Keegan has never disclosed, but which is thought to be expressive of the everlasting gratitude of two people.

Nor has his friend the master-at-arms been forgotten.

Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL, like Mr. Wister and Mr. Crawford, has a deeper claim than residence and choice of subjects give, to the name of "American author," since New England blood dating back on both sides to the sixteen hundreds, Southern birth, and a training in the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis were united in his equipment. But after only a brief service in the navy he resigned his commission and definitely followed the leading of his literary tastes. He was for a short period with *The Army and Navy Journal*, during which time his first short story, "Mr. Keegan's Elopement," was published in *The Century Magazine*. Mr. Churchill became an editor of *The Cosmopolitan Magazine*, but left that again, to be more free for continuous original work than the routine duties connected with a monthly magazine permit.

His first book appeared in 1897, — "The Celebrity," written in a vein of the liveliest comedy; but even then the first of his series of novels, which cover charac-

teristic phases of American social development and will when completed present a picture of national life such as is not only unequalled, but has never been even attempted in its breadth and entirety, was well under way.

Certainly "The Celebrity," although recognized as —

> "an extremely clever piece of work that is likely to be popular as it deserves" (*Boston Transcript*), as "such a piece of inimitable comedy in a literary way, as has not appeared for years; the purest, keenest fun" (*Chicago Inter-Ocean*), as "a humorously sensational novel of a rather unusual kind, decidedly original and entertaining, one of the best pieces of construction that has appeared in a long while . . . an altogether clever and out-of-the-way sort of book" (*Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*),

did not lead the critics to prophesy any such a second novel as Mr. CHURCHILL'S "Richard Carvel," which was described as —

> "seldom if ever surpassed by an American romance, in breadth of canvas, massing of dramatic effect, depth

of feeling, and rare wholesomeness of spirit." — *Chicago Tribune.*

"'Richard Carvel' is one of the most brilliant works of imagination of the decade. It breathes the spirit of true romance in a way that is truly fascinating." — *Philadelphia Press.*

"The charm of the book, which is very great, lies in the vividness of its pictures of the life of London and the colonies in those picturesque days when the spirit of revolution was slowly but surely developing."

— *Washington Times.*

Coming just a year later, Mr. CHURCHILL'S next great novel, "The Crisis," dealt as effectively with the questions and scenes of the Civil War as did the earlier story with the struggle between the colonies and the mother country. Of the qualities which have made it rarely valuable, Mr. HAMILTON MABIE wrote: —

"'The Crisis' is distinctly the most carefully studied and the most convincing novel which has yet been written on the Civil War; no other story brings the reader so close to some of the great figures in the struggle; no other brings before the imagination so distinctly the

terrible experiences which befell those who stood in the centre of the storm. 'The Crisis' is a footnote to American history, as well as a stirring and moving novel.

"As a study of the plain, substantial stuff of which American citizenship is largely made up, 'The Crisis' has deep and abiding interest. It ought to be read by those students of American life beyond the sea who are anxious 'neither to laugh nor to weep, but to understand'; for it brings out the heroic fibre of the best American stock, its quick responsiveness to the educational power of opportunity, its resourcefulness, its unassuming dignity and force."

— *The Times Saturday Review.*

"It is a high office to give a new generation of Americans their first vivid conception of the struggle in which the nation was reborn."

— *Review of Reviews.*

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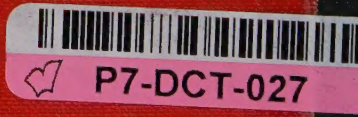
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